

he freed the thunder loose, narrowly rescuing it from death. The experience left the thunder in a confused state of mind which lasted for seven days and nights. The emperor's officer, in rebuilding the pillar, inscribed it with the following epitaph: "Here lies Sugaru who caught the thunder both in his lifetime and after his death."

This is the origin of the name, "Hill of Thunder," given in the time of the old capital.

2

*On Taking a Fox as a Wife and Bringing Forth a Child*¹

In the reign of Emperor Kinmei (that is, Amekuni-oshihiraki-hironiwa no mikoto 天國押開廣庭命, the emperor who resided at the Palace of Kanazashi in Shikishima),² a man from Ōno district of Mino province 三野國大野郡³ set out on horseback in search of a good wife. In a field he came across a pretty and responsive girl. He winked at her and asked, "Where are you going, Miss?" "I am looking for a good husband," she answered. So he asked, "Will you be my wife?" and, when she agreed, he took her to his house and married her.

Before long she became pregnant and gave birth to a boy. At the same time their dog also gave birth to a puppy, it being the fifteenth of the twelfth month. This puppy constantly barked at the mistress⁴ and seemed fierce and ready to bite. She became so frightened that she asked her husband⁵ to beat the dog to death. But he felt sorry for the dog and could not bear to kill it.

In the second or third month, when the annual quota of rice⁶ was hulled, she went to the place where the female servants were pounding rice in a mortar to give them some refreshments. The dog, seeing her, ran after her barking and almost bit her. Startled and terrified, she

1. The prototype of Japanese folktales concerning a fox; one tale of the Venerable Dōjō cycle; see Chap. II(2)b. Cf. M. W. de Visser, "The Fox and the Badger in Japanese Folklore," *TASJ*, XXXVI, Part Three (1908), 20-21. Cf. *Fusō ryakki* (III, Kinmei), *Mizukagami* (I, Kinmei).

2. See Preface, n. 7, above.

3. The eastern part of present Ibi-gun, Gifu-ken 岐阜縣揖斐郡. The country was divided into provinces (*kuni* 國), and provinces were divided into districts (*kōri* 郡). In the beginning of the eighth century, there were sixty-six provinces comprising 592 districts.

4. 家室 *ietoji*, housewife.

5. 家長 *iegimi*, master of the family.

6. The rice harvested in the preceding autumn had to be delivered to the capital before the end of the eighth month.

suddenly changed into a wild fox and jumped up on top of the hedge.

Having seen this, the man said, "Since a child was born between us, I cannot forget you. Please come always and sleep with me." She acted in accordance with her husband's words and came and slept with him. For this reason she was named "Kitsune" meaning "come and sleep."⁷

Slender and beautiful in her red skirt (it is called pink), she would rustle away from her husband, whereupon he sang of his love for his wife:

Love fills me completely

After a moment of reunion.

Alas! She is gone.⁸

The man named his child Kitsune, which became the child's surname—Kitsune no atae.⁹ The child, famous for his enormous strength, could run as fast as a bird flies. He is the ancestor of the Kitsune-no-atae family in Mino province.¹⁰

3

*On a Boy of Great Physical Strength Whose Birth Was Given by the Thunder's Blessing*¹

In the reign of Emperor Bitatsu 敏達 (that is, Nunakura-futotama-shiki no mikoto 淳名倉太玉敷命, who resided at the Palace of Osada in Iware 磐余譯語田宮),² there was a farmer in the village of Katawa in Ayuchi district of Owari province 尾張國阿育知郡片蕪里.³ While he was working to irrigate the rice fields, it began to rain. He took shelter under a tree and stood there holding a metal rod⁴ in his hands. When it thundered, he raised the rod in fear. At that moment the thunder struck in front of him in the form of a child, who made a

7. Folk etymology of *kitsune*, fox; *kitsu-ne* 來寝 means "Come and sleep," while *ki-tsune* 來毎 means "come always."

8. In the form of a thirty-one syllable poem (5-7-5-7-7).

9. 狐直; although Kitsune no atae is not listed in the *Shinsen shōjiroku* 新撰姓氏錄, atae is a hereditary title conferred on the family of a local governor who was of the local gentry class.

10. For his descendant, see II.4.

1. One tale of the Venerable Dōjō cycle; see II.4, 27; quoted in the *Fusō ryakki* (III, Bitatsu), *Mizukagami* (II, Bitatsu), etc.

2. Emperor Bitatsu's palace is located in the western part of present Sakurai-shi, Nara-ken.

3. Present Furuwatari-chō, Naka-ku, Nagoya-shi 名古屋市中區古渡町.

4. 金杖 metal rod or plow (the *Fusō ryakki* gives "plow").